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FOSTER'S Common Sense LEADS

AND HOW TO LEARN THEM

BY THE AUTHOR OF

FOSTER'S WHIST MANUAL

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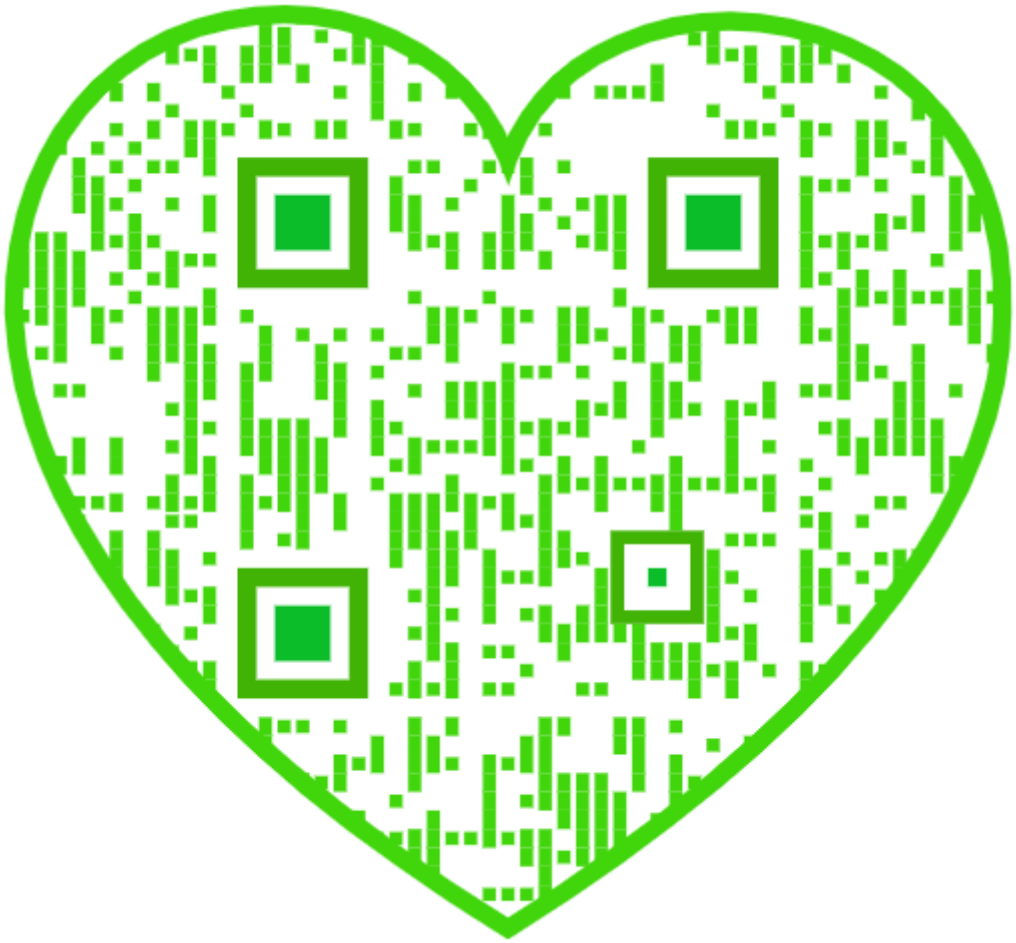

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FOSTER'S

COMMON SENSE LEADS

AND HOW TO LEARN THEM

BY THE AUTHOR OF

FOSTER'S WHIST MANUAL

Robert Frederick Foster
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NEW YORK
BRENTANO'S

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PREFACE.

It has always been the custom to regard the method of opening the hand and leading from certain combinations of cards, as among the most important elements in whist tactics, and it is usually toward that part of the subject that the attention of the student is first particularly directed.

For many years the system of opening leads was universally the same, and a player would find hands opened in much the same manner in all parts of the world. To-day, this is no longer the case, and not only are hands opened in different ways in various parts of the country, but dissimilar systems may be found among members of the same club.

The old leads, as they are called, and the American leads, which shared the field with them for a time, are no longer played in their integrity, and in their place has sprung up a system of leads based upon common-sense considerations of the average value of the hand from which the lead is made. What these leads are, and how to learn them, it is the purpose of the following pages to show.

OBJECTS OF LEADING.

The old theories of leading were based upon a very simple process of elimination and selection. The first consideration of the player was as to whether or not he was strong enough to lead trumps, and he was told that if he had five of them he should invariably do so. Failing such strength in the trump suit, the next question to decide was as to which of the plain suits was the strongest, length being the chief consideration. Any suit of four or more cards was available, but anything less than four, even if it contained a sequence of King Queen Jack, was absolutely out of the question.

As between two suits, one of five and the other of four cards, nothing but extreme weakness in the longer suit would justify the selection of the shorter. In the correspondence tournament, Hand No. 6, we find all four players opening with a small diamond from J 10 5 3, in preference to a small club from 6 5 4 3 2, the other cards being two spades, Queen high, and two trumps, Jack high; the King turned.

Having selected the suit, the next thing was to give the partner as accurate a description of it as

possible. The mere fact of leading it showed that it was the longest suit in the hand, and the cards led on the first and second rounds were selected for the purpose of adding as many details as possible.

The two systems chiefly in use by those who still adhere to this theory of opening are the old leads, which have come to be known as the Foster Leads, because they are still given in "Foster's Manual," although all other text-books have ceased to publish them, and the American Leads. The Foster Leads are based on the assumption that information of strength is of more importance than information of length, while American Leads take the contrary view. From the following hands, for instance:

No. 1.

No. 2.

No. 3.

No. 4.

the Foster Leads start with the King in every instance, in order that there may be no doubt about the command of the suit. American Leads start with the Jack from the first; the Queen from the second and fourth, and the Ace from the third. This makes it impossible for the partner to be sure of the command of the suit until the second round.

In the case of the Queen this is especially confusing, because the partner never knows whether it is accompanied by the two cards above it, the two below it, or by the King alone. In Hand No. 10 of the correspondence tournament, two tricks were lost at almost every table by the uncertainty of this lead, third hand having none of the suit, and not knowing whether to trump the Queen or not.

When high cards are not led, the number in suit is shown in the same manner in both systems by leading the fourth-best, and the partner is able to infer the number of higher cards out against the leader by using the eleven rule.

In both systems the primary object is supposed to be to secure the greatest number of tricks possible with the combination of cards that the suit contains; but in the Foster Leads the tricks are the chief object, while in American Leads, information is the main thing. Both considerations, trick-making and information, start out

with the express condition that the longest suit must be led.

The main point about both these systems of leading, and the one in which we are chiefly interested at present, is the fact that all the considerations connected with them are confined to the suit itself, as it exists in the leader's hand; and that the leader is obliged to play that suit, simply because it is long, and without any regard to the consequences. Those who advocate this system make no attempt to trace its results, or to ascertain the number of tricks lost or won simply by leading certain combinations of cards. It is accepted as a rule, for instance, that if you hold the King Queen Jack of a suit alone it is bad policy to lead it; but if you hold one small card in addition, it immediately becomes one of the most desirable leads possible. No one seems to have stopped to demand the facts in support of such an extraordinary claim.

The objects, therefore, in both these systems are confined to two things: Firstly, to show the partner the longest suit in the hand simply because it is long, and without any regard to its intrinsic value as a trick-winner. Secondly, to make the best of a bad job by handling the suit which the player is forced to open, in such a manner as to get as many tricks out of it as are possible under the restriction that the suit must be led.

Modern players are heartily sick of this wooden arrangement, because they have found that in compelling themselves to lead from certain combinations of cards just because a certain number of small cards accompany them, they give the adversaries a decided advantage in the matter of winning tricks in the suit. They have also found that the information conveyed to the partner as to the details of the individual suit gives him no clue as to the possibilities of the hand in other suits.

Common-sense investigation of the results actually obtained in whist matches shows that the success of a long suit does not depend upon its being opened in the first place, nor upon its details being demonstrated to the partner, but upon its proper management in combination with the trumps, which will protect it, and with the high cards of other suits, which will bring it in. This being so, the mere leading or showing of the suit is not enough, or is unnecessary, unless it can be led in such a manner as to show its possibilities as well as its contents.

The chief distinctions, then, between the ordinary leads and those which are called Common-sense Leads are these:

The ordinary leads, as given in the text-books, proceed upon the theory that the player should first select a certain suit, simply on account of

its length, and should then demonstrate to the partner as nearly as possible the exact combination and number of cards that the suit contains, without any regard to the remainder of the hand.

The Common-sense Leads, on the contrary, take into consideration the entire hand, and are based upon the theory that the value of a long suit does not depend so much upon the suit itself as upon the trumps and cards of re-entry that accompany it. It is therefore necessary, in order to secure the effective co-operation of the partner, to show him not only the strength or weakness of the suit itself, but the general characteristics of the hand of which that suit forms a part.

THE CONDITIONS OF SUCCESS.

Common-sense Leads are divided into two classes: offensive and defensive. The offensive leads are made with a view to getting more out of the suit than its average value, which will require that some other suit shall make less than its average value. Defensive leads are made with a view to getting the best results from certain combinations of high cards, by taking advantage of position, especially that favorable for finesse and tenace.

The attack requires the hand to be played as a unit, each suit being considered in relation to the other suits and to the trumps. The most important elements in the attacking game are the leads and returns, the management of the trump suit, and the preservation of the cards of re-entry.

The defence requires nothing but the careful management of each individual suit, especially those upon which an attack is made by the adversaries. The most important elements in the defensive game are the preservation of tenaces and guarded cards, finessing, and second hand play.

The conditions of success in the attacking game are superior strength, either in high cards or in trumps, and the player's efforts are usually directed to securing a trick-taking value for certain small cards which they do not naturally possess. This is done by establishing a suit, exhausting the adverse trumps, and then bringing the established suit into play.

The conditions for success in the defensive game are that the adversaries shall be placed in such a position that they will be compelled to lead to their disadvantage, and will be prevented from deriving the full benefit of their superior strength. This is done by keeping guards on the weak suits, and by making the trumps separately.

It is a well-established fact that the average

value of a plain suit is two and a quarter tricks, because an average of six and a quarter tricks falls to the trumps, leaving six and three-quarters to be divided among the three plain suits. In order to make more than the average number of tricks out of any plain suit, therefore, it will be necessary to get the adverse trumps out of its way, and to get the suit into play after they are gone.

To accomplish this, as already pointed out, we must reduce the average value of some other suit. The number of tricks in the trump suit may be reduced to four or five by leading trumps, so that they all fall together. The number of tricks in a plain suit may be reduced to one, or even to nothing, if the suit can be shut out by bringing in the established cards of another suit. The reverse of this proposition is to increase the value of the trump suit by making the trumps separately, which naturally reduces the value of all the plain suits; or to reduce the value of any individual suit by making the high cards of each suit as rapidly as possible, before any long suit can be brought into play as established.

When the conditions are favorable to success, it is the object of the Common-sense Leads to take immediate advantage of them; but when they are not favorable, the Common-sense Leads are so arranged as to adapt themselves to the cir-

cumstances and become defensive. In either event, the partner is encouraged or warned, as the case may be, so that there shall be no misunderstanding as to the mutual possibilities of the two hands.

This naturally divides our subject into two parts—attacking leads and defensive leads—and each must be considered separately.

OFFENSIVE LEADS.

The two groups of leads, offensive and defensive, are each divided into three classes, forming six distinct types. These begin with those which are the most uncommon, because they depend on the possession of unusual strength ; and end with those which are the most frequent, because they occur in the great majority of hands.

The three classes of offensive leads are :

1. Those in which the player begins with the trumps.

2. Those in which the suit is shown before leading the trumps.

3. Those in which the suit must be established before leading the trumps.

All these leads, it will be observed, turn upon the proper time for leading trumps, and the

trump attack is thus easily inferred to be the foundation of all offensive leads.

As already pointed out, all Common-sense Leads depend upon a consideration of the possibilities of the entire hand, and not upon the length or combination of cards in any individual suit. The chief thing, therefore, is to study the general character of the hand, and the style of treatment which is probably best suited to it as a whole. A little practice in this systematic analysis and classification will soon enable a player to recognize any given hand as belonging to a certain group and demanding a certain opening, in accordance with its possibilities, which are based on the most probable or usual distribution of the cards in the other hands. In the following pages it is proposed to examine each of these groups separately, pointing out the reasons for handling it in a certain way.

TRUMP-LEADING HANDS.

Trumps should be led from all hands which contain a card of re-entry in each of the plain suits.

Cards of re-entry are those which are reasonably certain to win tricks in the suit, or will

probably stop it on the first or second round. Aces are the best; combinations of King and Queen, or King Jack and small cards, come next. Sequences of Queen Jack Ten are stoppers, but they are not re-entries in the proper sense of the word, because the suit may go round twice before the Queen can stop it, and the Queen may then be ruffed and lost. Singly-guarded Kings are not considered cards of re-entry, because they may be led through and killed; but they may become such during the play of the hand if the Ace falls. A Queen, or even a Queen and Jack together, are never considered cards of re-entry, however well guarded; but if two suits contain re-entry cards and the third has a sure stopper, such as the sequence of Queen Jack Ten, the hand undoubtedly demands an immediate lead of trumps, such as the following, for instance. Hearts are trumps in this and all following hands.

♡ K 10 2; ♣ A 10 3; ♢ K J 5; ♠ Q J 10 4

Trumps should be led from all hands which contain two suits already established, even if the third suit is entirely missing; in fact, the weaker this third suit is the better, for reasons which will presently appear.

Established suits are those in which you and

your partner may reasonably expect to take three or more tricks, if not every trick in the suit. If the suit consists of four cards only, it must contain at least four honors, counting the Ten as one, which will require it to be headed by one or other of the following combinations:

No. 1.

No. 2.

No. 3.

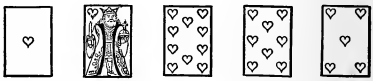
These combinations are so strong that a player will not hold them more than once in twenty-five deals.

If the trumps accompanying such hands are weak, and the player is unlikely to win either the second or third round, it is usually safer and better to show the suit first by leading it once. This will prevent the possibility of your partner's leading your weak or missing suit if he should be in the lead after the trumps have been exhausted, or the time has come to force the adversary.

From each of the foregoing combinations, the proper lead is the King, no matter how many cards the suit contains, because the King, followed by a trump lead, always shows complete command of the suit or a willingness to take a finesse on the second round. Suits headed by Ace Queen Jack Ten should not be shown.

Trumps should be led from hands containing one suit practically established, if accompanied by another suit which can probably be established in one lead, provided this second suit contains five or more cards. Such suits should be headed by at least three honors, which will require them to contain some one of the following combinations:

No. 1.

No. 2. 

No. 3.

No. 4.

A player will hold such combinations about once in twelve deals.

If the player is weak in trumps, he may show his suit first by leading the King; but he must be willing to lead trumps after being forced in his weak suit if he loses the first round of the suit in which he has not the Ace. Such hands as the following belong to this class:

♡ A 6 3; ♣ A K J 3 2; ◇ K Q 10 9 3

♡ J 10 6; ♣ A Q J 8 3; ◇ A K Q 9; ♠ 6

♡ Q J; ♣ A K 10 9 3; ◇ K Q J 10; ♠ 3 2

If one suit is practically established and the other contains but one card of re-entry, the player should hold at least four trumps to justify an original opening from the trump suit, such hands as the following being good examples:

♡ K 10 6 3; ♣ A K Q 9 7 3; ◇ K Q; ♠ 6

♡ Q J 4 2; ♣ A K Q J 2; ◇ A 7 3; ♠ J

♡ 10 8 6 3; ♣ A K Q 10 2; ◇ K J 10; ♠ 5

In the third, the trumps being weak, the suit should be shown first by leading it once.

Unestablished suits of five or more cards,

headed by two honors only, should be accompanied by at least two cards of re-entry and four trumps to justify an original lead of trumps. Such suits should be headed by some one of the following combinations:

No. 1.

No. 2.

No. 3.

No. 4.

No. 5.

No. 6.

A player will hold such combinations only about once in six deals.

As it will probably take two rounds to estab-

lish such suits, the original opening from each of them should be a small card, which shows the necessity for two cards of re-entry, the first combination being perhaps the only exception. If these two re-entry cards are in different suits, trumps should be led regardless of number, because all such belong to our first group of trump-leading hands. If the re-entry cards are both in the same suit there should be four trumps, as in the following examples:

♡ K 10 6 3; ♣ A K 9 8 2; ♢ A K 2; ♠ 10

♡ A J 3 2; ♣ K Q 8 6 4; ♢ A Q J; ♠ 5

♡ Q 10 9 3; ♣ A Q 6 4 2; ♢ K Q J 10

The chief distinction to be made is that between hands which are strong enough to give the player a reasonable chance for success with average strength in his partner's hand, and those in which he is weak in trumps himself, although he may have four of them. In the first he may begin with the trump suit immediately; but in the second he is depending so much on his partner's assistance that it will be safer first to show the suit for which the trumps are about to be led. The general expectation is, that when you have two honors in trumps, counting the Ten as one, your partner's share is one of the three re-

maining, so that if you count on three honors between you, you are playing in accordance with probability.

WEAK OR MISSING SUITS.

The element of one very weak, or even entirely missing, suit should be no obstacle to leading trumps, because a player may always finesse against a suit just as he may finesse against a card. The weaker you are in a suit the more chances there are that the suit will be pretty equally distributed among the three other players and that your partner will get his share of it, which will usually be enough to protect or stop it.

The important principle to be remembered in this connection is, that the less cards you have of a suit which you wish your partner to protect the better, because there are more cards of the suit to be distributed, and more will probably fall to his share. If you are long and weak in a suit, the chances of your partner's being able to protect it are much less, because there are fewer cards for him to hold. In such hands as the following, for instance:

♡ K 10 3; ♣ A K J 10 6 2; ◇ A K 4 2

♡ A 6 4 3; ♣ A K Q J; ◇ A; ♠ 8 6 4 5

there is a much better chance for your partner to stop the spade suit in the first than in the last, because in the first hand his share of the suit will be four or five cards, including two honors, while in the second it will be three cards only, with the probability that four honors in the suit are against him.

SHOTS.

In many hands in which one suit is exceptionally strong a player may take what is called a "shot," in the hope of finding his partner with sufficient strength to make the suit. Shot plays usually consist in leading a trump from four of them without any re-entry cards, or from very weak trumps with a re-entry card. Take the following hand, for instance:

♡ J 6; ♣ A K Q J 6 4; ◇ A 3 2; ♠ 5 4

You have only one re-entry card and are very weak in trumps, but have a suit of tremendous possibilities if it could only be brought in. Such hands are sufficiently uncommon to justify exceptional treatment, and many players believe it best to take a shot on them and lead the trumps, even without showing the suit first. If partner

proves able to exhaust the trumps, the suit can usually be shown by discarding both the others.

With four trumps, but no re-entry, the same chance may be taken, as in the following example:

♡ K J 10 3; ♣ A K Q 10 8 7 3; ◇ 10 4

There is no possibility of re-entry except in the trump suit itself; but if the adverse trumps can be exhausted, or if the player can remain with the lead on the third round of them, so as to get the first force on a possible four-trump hand, he must make every one of his clubs.

These shots are pure gambles, in which the player starts with the knowledge that the odds are greatly against him; but it should be remembered that the tricks to be gained in case of success far outweigh those which may be lost in case of failure. As a rule, nothing is lost by leading trumps from such a hand, except a possible ruff in the missing suit.

LONG-SUIT LEADING HANDS.

When we come to suits which are not sufficiently strong or well protected by cards of re-entry to justify an original lead of trumps, we

must establish the suit first if we hope to make more out of it than its average value of two and a quarter tricks.

There are two general principles governing the long-suit leads:

Suits of less than five cards are not worth playing for as long suits unless they contain at least four honors, counting the Ten as one; and even suits of five or more cards in which the player cannot win both the second and third rounds, or is not willing to take a finesse on the second round, so as to retain the command until the third, are not worth playing for.

Long suits which are not accompanied by either trump strength or re-entry cards are not worth playing for as long suits, no matter how strong they are. That is to say, a player should not expect to make more than two tricks out of them, which is the long-suit idea, and must cheerfully face the prospect of having the adversaries ruff them. Of course, he may make more than two tricks in such suits; but if he does, it will be due to the peculiar distribution of the cards, and not to any good management on his part.

In order to make a long suit worth playing for, it should be accompanied by at least average strength; because if it is not, you are attempting the old folly of playing a strong game with

a weak hand. This strength should be three or four trumps, and as many cards of re-entry as will probably be necessary to get the suit established and bring it into play, with reasonable assistance from your partner.

A proper understanding of this principle is very important in connection with the study of Common-sense Leads, because it enables us to distinguish between hands in which a comparatively weak suit has a better chance of success, because it is accompanied by several re-entry cards, than a stronger suit would have when accompanied by only one card of re-entry. Take the following hands, for example:

♡ J 7 2; ♣ K 8 2; ♢ K 10 9 6 4; ♠ 10 2

♡10 9 3; ♣ K Q 3; ♢ Q 10 5 4 2; ♠ A J

It will probably take at least two leads to establish the long suit in either of these hands. In the first this second lead may be secured at the expense of the only re-entry card, or that card may be forced out before the trumps can be exhausted. In the second, on the contrary, even if two leads should be required to develop the hand, one card of re-entry must be left intact.

In the first hand the suit is really not worth playing for as a long suit, because the probabili-

ties are decidedly against getting more than two tricks out of it; but in the second hand there is a very reasonable chance of bringing in the suit, in spite of the apparent weakness in the trumps.

DEFENSIVE LEADS.

The defensive leads may be divided into three principal groups:

1. Those in which the player makes all the tricks he can while he is in the lead.

2. Those in which he leads weak suits or trumps, in order to avoid leading away from certain combinations of honors in other weak or short suits.

3. Those in which he leads supporting cards, in order to warn his partner to protect himself, and to give him opportunities to finesse.

Each of these may be briefly examined in order to show the peculiarities of the hands from which such leads are usually selected.

RUNNING.

In the first group, in which the player's chief object is to make hay while the sun shines, the most desirable leads are from sequences of high cards in suits which are not accompanied by any

trump strength or cards of re-entry. Such combinations are the following:

The shorter these suits are in the leader's hand the better, because that will increase the probability of their going round several times; otherwise the number of small cards does not affect the lead, because the object is not to establish any small cards, but only to get tricks with the higher ones. It cannot be too strongly impressed on the student that any attempt to get more than two tricks out of a plain suit must be based on the assumption that the suit can be protected by strength in trumps, and brought into play by cards of re-entry. If these elements do not exist, the most judicious course for the player to adopt is to run for it, and make what tricks he can before the adversaries bring their superior forces to bear and get their long suits into play, which might result in shutting out his suit altogether.

When running for it in this manner, the top of the sequence should always be led. The Ace is never led from a suit of Ace and small cards only, for reasons which will presently be explained.

If the sequence is a winning sequence, and the suit is also long, it is often a good plan not to lead the suit more than once until you have given your partner a chance to come to your assistance if he has anything. Although you may have no re-entry or trumps yourself, there is always the possibility that your partner may be strong. If you go right along with your suit until it is ruffed, and no one has any more of it to put you in with, your hand is absolutely worthless. For this reason, many players will not pursue a winning sequence except in a short suit, but treat the hand as a shot. With a suit of five or six cards, for instance, headed by Ace King Queen, they lead the King to show their strength, and then demonstrate to their partner the necessity for his assistance if anything more than the average is to be made out of such a suit.

The usual continuation in such defensive leads is a supporting card, or the highest card of the second-best suit, as in the following hand:

♡ 7 3; ♣ A K Q 10 8 3; ◇ J 10; ♠ 6 4 2

By following the Club King with the Jack of Diamonds the partner is informed that the leader has a great Club suit, too good to go on with, but that he has no possible re-entry, and is very weak in trumps; too weak to take a shot with

them even. This style of opening gives the partner an opportunity to come to the assistance of the strong suit if he can, which would be impossible if the player went on with it until the adversaries ruffed it. If a supporting Jack or Queen, led from a secondary short suit in this manner, should hold the trick, it is needless to say that a trump lead should follow at once.

Some players will not give the partner this chance, but go on with the suit in the hope of finding the partner short, and giving him discards. This may secure three tricks in the suit, but never more.

When a long suit is headed by only one or two winning cards, such as the following combinations:

No. 1.

No. 2.

unaccompanied by any re-entry or trump strength, it is usually best to go right along and make what tricks you can before the adversaries get any chance to discard.

SUPPORTING-CARD LEADS.

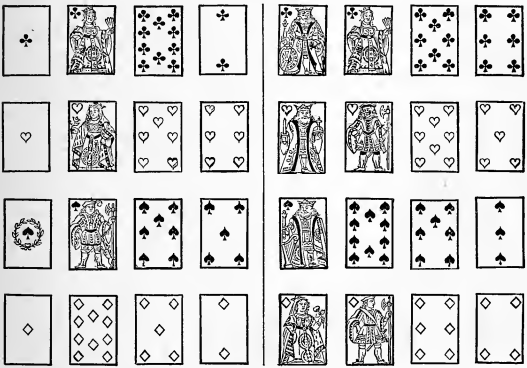
When a suit is not headed by any sequence of high cards, but contains two or three honors not in sequence, the manner of handling it depends entirely upon the rest of the hand. If there is any chance for the suit, as when it is accompanied by cards of re-entry or trump strength, we have already seen that the player should begin with a small card, and try to get it established. If there is no such chance, it will be better not to touch such suits at all, because they have two chances if they are not opened in the first place.

The first chance is, that some of the other players may get the trumps going about the middle of the hand, not knowing you hold a strong tenace suit perhaps. After the smoke of the battle over the trumps has cleared away, your suit will have a clear field, one of the great obstacles to its success, your weakness in trumps, being no longer a factor in the problem. This is a very important consideration, and sadly overlooked, even by our best players.

The other chance is, that your adversaries may be long in the suit and may attempt to establish it, not knowing you are strong in it, in which

case your high cards, especially if not in sequence, may prove very valuable as stoppers and killers, and may give you a good finesse against a strong hand on your right.

From all such combinations as the following, whether the suit is long or short, the lead is very disadvantageous unless the suit is accompanied by trump strength or re-entry cards.



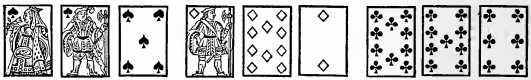
A player will hold one of these combinations about seven times in ten hands, except the first, which will come about once in thirty hands.

In order to avoid such leads, and also to warn your partner that your suit, even if you have one, has no reasonable chance for success with only

average strength in his hand, it is best to select a supporting card from the top of a shorter and weaker suit. When you have no suit at all, such leads answer the same purpose of warning.

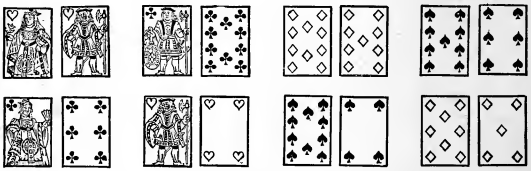
The combinations which are valuable as supporting-card leads are of three kinds, shortness in the suit being the chief requisite:

1. Those of three cards, headed by two good supporting cards in sequence, such as the following:



The player will hold these only about once in three hands.

2. Suits of two cards only, containing one or two good supporting cards, such as the following:



These are the most desirable of all supporting leads, but a player will not hold more than one of them in every four hands.

3. Singletons, which are any card below a King. Many players dislike to lead a singleton which is lower than a 7, because it might be taken for a strong suit unless the fall of the cards to the first trick was such as to show the partner that the original leader could not have held two honors in the suit, and was not trying to establish it. In actual practice, however, such an error can never occur except between wooden partners, because if a player starts with a small card in order to establish his suit, his partner should not try to get out the trumps until he knows the suit is established, which it cannot be, except in the partner's hand, if a singleton is led.

Singletons are held about once in three deals, but if a player will not lead anything below a 7 or above a Queen, he will hold such singletons only about once in six deals. On the other hand, the cases are extremely rare in which the lowest card of an unestablished suit of five, containing two honors, is not below a 7.

ERRONEOUS IDEAS.

Many persons fall into the error of supposing that short suits should be led with the deliberate intention of ruffing them on the second or third round. While a player may be willing to take advantage of his opportunities to make his small trumps separately from his partner's in this manner, that is not the primary object of the lead, because every player starts his weak suit in the hope that his partner will prove strong in it. It is only when he is disappointed in this that he is ready to ruff the suit which neither he nor his partner can protect. The short-suit opening is chiefly useful in warning the partner that the opener has not a long-suit hand, or is not strong enough to expect to make more than the average number of tricks in any suit, even with reasonable assistance from his partner.

All leads from suits of more than three cards containing single honors are very bad, unless the honor is the Ace and the player is sufficiently strong to risk both leading a low card in the first place, and finessing any good card his partner may lead him on the return. It can be demonstrated that simply by leading away from single

honors, such as King or Queen, the adversaries are given a decided advantage in position, which will secure them about fifty-five tricks out of every hundred in the suit opened, without trumping. As this is a difference of twenty per cent. in their favor, it is great odds to play against.

It is continually urged by those who have never given the matter the attention it deserves that by leading a short suit, especially if it is weak, you will probably establish that suit in the hands of the adversary. There are two considerations in connection with this theory: The first is, that by leading the suit up to your right-hand adversary you do not give him any advantage that he would not have had in any case, unless your partner puts up an honor and gets it killed. The second is, that the supporting card is especially designed to prevent this very thing, and to give him a chance to keep his good cards. The players that object to the short-suit opening will lead a small card from a long weak suit, which exposes their partners' honors to the very fate from which the supporting card would save them. It is also claimed that you give the adversary a great advantage by exposing your weakness. Would not that weakness be much more seriously exposed if your partner led the suit to you and you could not do better than a nine third hand?

You are no more likely to establish in the hands of the adversaries a suit in which you are short than one in which you have four or five cards to a single honor. By leading the short suit to your partner you secure the great advantage of preventing him from leading it to you, and you also advise him in time to protect himself in it. By leading long weak suits from unprotected hands you frequently kill your partner's good cards, and give the adversaries all the advantage of the position.

No fact is more firmly established from the experience of those who know how to manage supporting cards than that more weak long suits are made by not leading them than can possibly be made by opening them in the first place. It must be clearly understood, of course, that the partner is to take every advantage of his position when he is thus fairly warned by the opening lead. If the third hand holds Ace and small cards only of a suit in which anything from an 8 to a Queen is led to him, it is his duty to pass the first trick, whether the second hand covers or not. By this means he keeps control of the adversaries' suit, and as the majority of such leads are from two-card suits the adversaries cannot safely return them, because that would allow the original third hand to put on the Ace and then force his partner. The great mistake

made by those who attempt to play short suits is that they do not take the warnings their partners give them. They do not keep control of the suits their partners ask them to defend. They do not place the adversaries at the disadvantage which the lead intends.

If the third hand holds King and small cards when a supporting card is led to him he should invariably pass it, even if the second hand covers. No good player holding Ace Queen, for instance, will finesse against his partner, second hand, by putting the Queen on the Jack led, so that third hand, holding King under such circumstances, will know to a certainty that the only way to lose it is to put it on the Queen, and he should never do so unless he has the 9 or 10 and others with the King.

If a player will not take a warning, there is no use leading him warning cards; if he will not take a finesse which is offered to him, there is no use leading him finessing cards; and if he will not protect himself, there is no use leading him supporting cards.

The shorter you are in a suit the better your partner's chances for successful finesse, because the greater the probability that the adversaries are both long in the suit, and your partner is therefore not so likely to lose any good cards that he may hold up in finessing. On this ac-

count, it is very bad policy to lead your partner a supporting card from the top of a long weak suit, such as a 10 at the head of four or five small cards, because it tempts him to finesse in a suit which will probably not go round a second time, and therefore leaves him no room in which to manœuvre. The shorter and weaker you are in a suit, the better your partner's chances to be strong in it. That is the fundamental principle of all supporting-card leads.

A player should never open a three-card suit in which he has not at least two supporting cards in sequence, or one card as good as the Jack or 10, because it is folly to lead a suit in which you can accomplish nothing, and can neither give your partner a good finesse nor ruff the third round if the suit is against you. If any card below a 10 is opened by the original leader, it should be absolutely certain to the third hand that the suit is one of two cards only. If the player has no such suit in his hand, it is usually better to lead the trumps, simply as a matter of defence, for if a player has three of each suit, he cannot ruff anything, and there is no other use for the trumps but to lead them.

The partner will usually have no difficulty in seeing that such a trump lead is not an attack, but is made in order to avoid leading from what is called a "split hand." If he is strong in

trumps, little harm can be done by his going on; if the adversaries are strong and ought to lead trumps, they will often be alarmed by your trump opening, and will let their opportunity pass.

When a player holds two three-card suits, almost alike, such as 10 9 and small in each, with no good suit, it is usually bad policy to guess between these two suits, and better to make a defensive trump lead, although some persons do not think so, and insist on leading the one next their thumb.

The development of the hand in the afterplay, and the proper management of the cards held by the partner and adversaries when playing with or against common-sense openings, cannot be touched upon even in a work which is devoted exclusively to the leads, but in "Common Sense in Whist" the student will find complete details of the whole system of common-sense play, both in long suits and in short.

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